

New Government research identifies clear links between loneliness and mental health distress

- Research also finds that young people, disabled people and the LGBTQ community at higher risk of chronic loneliness
- Ministers across a range of Government departments to launch a renewed effort to tackle loneliness as part of national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

New research published today by the Government has identified direct links between chronic loneliness and mental health distress.

The findings, which coincide with the start of Loneliness Awareness Week, analysed mental health wellbeing and the impacts of loneliness over a sustained period, with results showing that chronic loneliness played a significant role in the onset and continuation of mental health distress.

The analysis also shows that mental health distress can play a significant role in the onset and continuation of chronic loneliness. Chronic loneliness is defined as people reporting they 'often' or 'always' feel lonely.

It suggests that targeted early intervention may play a more significant role in combating the effects of loneliness on mental health in the short term.

The Minister for Civil Society and Youth will now bring together ministers from a range of government departments to drive forward a renewed effort to tackle loneliness. The group will develop a delivery plan which will draw on this new evidence and set out new government action on loneliness early next year.

It will build on the 2018 Tackling Loneliness Strategy and the Government's work to tackle loneliness during the pandemic through its £750 million charity funding package.

Minister for Civil Society and Youth Nigel Huddleston said:

Loneliness can affect all of us and the research published today highlights that young and disabled people, alongside those with long-term health conditions, are disproportionately affected by loneliness.

As we start Loneliness Awareness Week I encourage everyone to reach out to someone they think may be feeling alone or isolated.

The Government prioritised tackling loneliness through the pandemic and we will now redouble our efforts to protect those most at risk.

Since the [strategy](#) for tackling loneliness was launched in 2018, the Government has continued to play a world-leading role, including appointing the first ever Minister for Loneliness. It has joined forces with a range of charitable partners to invest over £50 million pounds to help tackle the issue, with funding helping thousands of people to connect through the things that matter to them.

The independent research from the National Centre for Social Research was compiled from data encompassing over 35,000 people aged 16 and over from 2013/14 to 2019/20. As part of the study, researchers looked at what types of people were vulnerable to loneliness, whether risk factors for loneliness had changed, the relationship between mental wellbeing and loneliness, and what factors alleviated loneliness in the short term.

The new findings show that, in addition to the link between loneliness and mental health distress, specific groups of people are more vulnerable to the effects of loneliness:

- Young people between 16-34 were found to be particularly at risk, with research showing they were at five times greater risk of chronic loneliness than those aged 65 or older. Drivers of loneliness in young people were identified as negative social experiences, such as bullying from peers and siblings and arguments with parents.
- People with a disability or long standing health condition were 2.9 times more likely to experience chronic loneliness, and were less likely to move out of loneliness than those without a disability.
- Those in the LGBTQ community were also disproportionately affected, with people who identified as gay or lesbian 1.4 times more likely to be lonely, and people who identified as bisexual 2.5 times more likely to be lonely.
- Those in the lowest income quintile were 50 per cent more likely to experience chronic loneliness when compared with the wealthiest quintile.

Minister for Mental Health Gillian Keegan said:

Loneliness is a growing issue – and this research emphasises the continued need to ensure those feeling lonely can access the resources they need.

We're accelerating the rollout of mental health support teams in schools and expanding community services for adults and young people to make sure everyone can access support, as well as providing helpful advice and resources on the Every Mind Matters website.

We've also recently opened a call for evidence to gather views from the public to inform a new 10-year mental health plan which will focus on ensuring the nation is in positive mental wellbeing.

Dr Sokratis Dinos, Director of Health at the National Centre for Social

Research (NatCen), said:

This research highlights the significant relationship between loneliness and mental health. People experiencing chronic loneliness were shown in our study to be nearly four times more likely than people without chronic loneliness to be in mental distress.

Poor mental health can lead to difficulties connecting with others, social withdrawal and loneliness, while loneliness can equally contribute to poor mental health. Our research highlights the benefit of targeted support for people at different life stages, and community based activities for people with shared interests to improve outcomes.

During the pandemic, the Government made tackling loneliness a [priority](#) by allocating loneliness as a specific target category in the Government's £750 million charity funding package. The Government continues to encourage people to 'lift someone out of loneliness' as part of the [Better Health: Every Mind Matters](#) campaign, emphasising the benefits of social connection this Loneliness Awareness Week.

ENDS

Notes for editors

1. The research findings can be found [here](#) and [here](#).
2. The research commissioned by DCMS and produced by National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) is based on the Community Life Survey data from 2013/14 – 2019/20 and the UK Household Longitudinal Study (Understanding Society)
3. The cross-Whitehall Ministerial group will include Ministers from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Department for Transport, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Health and Social Care, Home Office, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Cabinet Office, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department for Education.
4. The Ministerial working group will also include the co-Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Tackling Loneliness and Connected Communities to draw on additional expertise in this area.
5. Government funding to tackle loneliness includes the £4 million Local Connections Fund which, in partnership with the National Lottery Community Fund, awarded almost 1,700 microgrants to charities and community groups throughout England.
6. ☐☐ Three tangible actions for anyone feeling lonely and three actions for people wanting to help. If you are lonely you can:
 - Keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours
 - Ask for help if you need shopping, medicine or are feeling lonely
 - Set a routine with online activities, regular tasks or by volunteering

7. If you are worried about someone who is lonely:
- Phone a friend or family member you think may be lonely
 - Smile, wave or chat from a safe distance with a neighbour
 - Help out through volunteering by picking up food, medicine or by offering regular conversation to someone living alone
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International Trade Secretary's MC12 Plenary Session Speech

It is a privilege to join the WTO's twelfth Ministerial Conference.

Many thanks must go to the Director General, Dr Ngozi, the General Council Chair, Ambassador Chambovey and the WTO Secretariat, for all their efforts to support this event.

This, the largest gathering of ministers in five years, comes at a pivotal time for the WTO and indeed, the global community.

Putin's brutal war has unleashed devastation and disruption on a world already burdened with Covid-19 and facing the omnipresent threat of climate change.

At such a critical and fragile time, we must defend the values that bind us together.

Values that mean we embrace trade's transformative power, uphold the Rules Based International System and turn our backs on division.

Now, as we begin the UK's first WTO ministerial conference as an independent trading nation, I want to set out the three principles that will guide our trade policy today and shape our vision for tomorrow:

First, we will always adhere to the concepts on which the World Trade Organisation was founded – trade that is open and free and brings prosperity to the world.

For the past 27 years, these concepts have allowed us to find solutions to the biggest questions facing us all.

Today, we must stay committed to these fundamental ideas and use them to address some of the world's most significant challenges.

Right now, food security is among the pressing.

Putin's insatiable appetite for power, threatens to leave the world's poorest famished.

I am glad that the UK-led Joint Statement on Open and Predictable Trade in Agriculture and Food Products, has been endorsed by over 50 other members – each committing to keep markets open and ensuring food is available to all.

At this Ministerial, I want us to work together to develop a more sustainable, efficient and resilient global food system for the long-term.

Climate change is another global challenge. The UK believes trade can help combat this threat, while simultaneously boosting economic growth.

As a green trade pioneer, the UK recently set out plans to go further and faster in this area.

Now, I want to work with my fellow trade ministers to put the WTO at the epicentre of finding solutions to the environmental issues that will define our future.

A significant step forward, would be a positive outcome to our negotiations on fisheries subsidies.

Success here would mean we achieve the first WTO multilateral agreement focused on sustainability.

The second principle that will guide the UK's actions; is the need to fight for fairness.

The UK wholeheartedly believes in the power of trade to allow countries to expand their economies.

So, we will support countries to increase exports, build stronger supply chains and tackle market distorting practices.

Every nation should shoulder its responsibility because fairness cuts both ways.

We must also support each other in times of need. Ukraine's struggle must be our shared struggle.

With our allies, the UK will continue do everything in our power to support Ukraine's right to exist as a democratic nation, including helping it rebuild in peace.

The day will surely come when ruined buildings are turned into construction sites and weapons are exchanged for laptops as Ukraine's services sector recovers and flourishes.

The UK therefore welcomes those delegates who want to join us in supporting Ukraine's trading present and future.

Our third principle is the need to make sure global trade rules truly address people's and businesses' modern-day issues.

All of us agree for the need for WTO modernisation. We must use this

ministerial to recommit to progress in this area.

In addition, trade rules created in the pre internet age need to move with the times.

One of our key goals will be keep down the costs for online trade by calling for a renewal of the e-Commerce moratorium at this Ministerial. Businesses will never forgive us if we fail at this task.

We must also go further both by accelerating progress on the joint initiative on e-commerce and by taking a reinvigorated approach to services and digital trade through the WTO, just as the UK has done through its Free Trade Agreements.

The pandemic has also demonstrated why we need a substantive trade and health package. Again, this is something, the UK will press for at this Ministerial.

My team and I look forward to many constructive discussions with our fellow delegates over the next days.

There may be some difficult conversations ahead but we should focus on all we share, rather than what sets us apart.

Our agreements reached here, on Lake Geneva's shores, will ensure that trade better serves our citizens and the world. Let us seize this opportunity with both hands.

WTO Ministerial Conference: Joint Statement in Solidarity with Ukraine

Statement from Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Latvia, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, The Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, United Kingdom, Ukraine, United States and Uruguay.

"We, the trade ministers/heads of delegation of the undersigned WTO Members, have met in Geneva today on the occasion of the 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO, to reiterate our full support for, and solidarity with, the people of Ukraine. We express our deep sadness at the devastating human losses and profound suffering caused by the aggression against Ukraine. In so doing, we reiterate our support for the UN General Assembly Resolutions of 2

March 2022 (A/RES/ES-11/1) and 24 March 2022 (A/RES/ES-11/2).

The war is also having a devastating impact, including on Ukraine's economy and ability to trade. The destruction of a significant part of Ukraine's transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, ports and railroads, is substantially impeding Ukraine's ability to produce, export, and import. We are gravely concerned about the consequences of this destruction for Ukraine and for global trade, in particular as regards the supply to international markets of a number of key commodities produced by Ukraine, including agricultural and food products, fertilisers, sunflower oil, and critical minerals. We are also deeply concerned by numerous reports of grain being plundered from Ukraine. These actions are at odds with the principles and values of the WTO.

We underline the importance of maintaining open and predictable markets, and Ukraine's ability to trade. Given this, we strongly condemn any actions targeting the means of supply, production, and transportation necessary for Ukraine to produce and export to the world, including agri-food products. We stress the need to ensure that the trade routes, especially sea routes and ports, are not blocked by the threat of the use of force.

The food security impacts are dramatic for those directly affected in Ukraine but are not just restricted to Ukraine and its citizens. Ukraine is one of the world's top exporters of key agricultural products like wheat, maize, barley, and sunflower oil. It is a major supplier to the World Food Programme. The impact of the war, including of the blockage of Ukraine's access to the Black Sea, is seriously jeopardizing food supply to some of the most vulnerable parts of the world, in developing countries. This risks pushing millions of people into food insecurity, adding to the already severe situation caused by COVID-19.

In this context, we will seek to support Ukraine and to facilitate its exports. We encourage WTO Members to do likewise in a manner commensurate with their capacity, including by facilitating the use of infrastructure or facilitating and simplifying customs procedures.

Within our capacity, we will look for ways to help Ukrainian farmers to continue planting and growing cereals and oilseeds, much needed for themselves and for the world. Within the capacity of each WTO Member, we will continue to provide humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of Ukrainian civilians, including to help secure their access to basic goods and services, including food. We will also look for ways to help Ukraine in its reconstruction as soon as circumstances permit."

[Bangladesh National Earth Olympiad](#)

2022 Award Ceremony

On Saturday 11 June, Acting British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Javed Patel, hosted a reception to recognise the finalists of the Bangladesh National Earth Olympiad 2022. Of the 35 participants selected for special awards, five will be going on to represent Bangladesh at the International Earth Science Olympiad which takes place from 24-30 August.

The National Earth Olympiad is an education and knowledge movement that aims to increase environmental science education across Bangladesh, and has been organised by Bangladesh Youth Environment Initiative every year since 2012. This year, the Olympiad was supported by the British High Commission in Dhaka, through the UK Government's roles as Commonwealth Chair-in-Office and host of COP26.

Between March and April the Olympiad reached thousands of young people across Bangladesh, and provided in-depth training to 250 young leaders on biodiversity, planetary boundaries, climate justice and environmental conservation. Bangladeshi young people aged between 14 and 18 were eligible to participate.

Congratulating the students on their success, Acting British High Commissioner Javed Patel said

"Climate action is a priority for the UK and I am glad that we supported this year's National Earth Olympiad, helping to establish the next generation of climate stewards in Bangladesh. It's vitally important that young people are empowered to be key stakeholders in driving local, national, regional, and global change. I am inspired by the young people here today, and confident that their drive and commitment to combatting the climate crisis will help them to do just that."

Professor Dr Kazi Matin Uddin Ahmed, Convener of the National Earth Olympiad in Bangladesh and one of the faculty members of the Department of Geology in the University of Dhaka, said

"The National Earth Olympiad has taken place since 2012, and was one of the first Olympiads that focused on the Geological and Environmental sciences. The competition has played a critical role in engaging students in understanding the urgency of the climate and environmental crisis. Since 2012, over 10,000 students have participated in this competition and over the last few years Bangladeshi Olympiad winners have also won high accolades and medals in the International Earth Olympiad. I strongly believe that the collective action that we need to solve this climate crisis will require scientists, scholars and practitioners who can guide policy action and technological innovation. The National Earth Olympiad is an important catalyser in this process."

Founder of the Bangladesh Youth Environment Initiative, and winner of the Queen's Young Leaders Award for 2015, Mr Shamir Shehab, said

“Against a backdrop of looming environmental, ecological and climate crises for Bangladesh and the world at large today, Bangladesh Youth Environment Initiative is striving to develop the next generation of stewards to tackle this planetary crisis. With more than 10 years of environmental action, the organisation has empowered young people from all over Bangladesh to strive toward a more sustainable, equitable and resilient planet Earth.

Bangladesh Youth Environment Initiative will continue its journey to educate and empower more young people to take climate actions with a focus on the grassroots level in the coming years to ensure equity and justice for the most marginalized and vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.”

Further information

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Freedom and fairness more important than ever, Trade Secretary tells WTO

Freedom and fairness should be front and centre of the global trade agenda to ensure communities at home and around the world benefit from the power of free trade, the International Trade Secretary says today.

Anne-Marie Trevelyan issued the clarion call as she prepares to lead a UK delegation attending the 12th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference (MC12).

While there, she will urge united global action to show solidarity with Ukraine, demonstrate Russia’s illegal assault will not undermine or weaken the rules-based international system, and push for reforms that will reduce our economic dependency on aggressors.

UK will use the high-level WTO meeting to secure meaningful progress on long-standing global issues, including food security, over-fishing and tariff-free

electronic trade, and drive forward international efforts to cope with the fallout from Russia's actions and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ahead of the summit, International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Putin's brutal war unleashed devastation and disruption on a world already burdened with Covid-19 and facing the omnipresent threat of climate change.

The UK will continue to show leadership at this critical and fragile time, when we must defend the values that bind us together. Freedom and fairness are now more important than ever if we wish to use global trade to grow our economies, deliver better living standards for communities at home and abroad, and to address some of the world's most significant challenges.

While in Geneva, the Trade Secretary is expected to meet with her counterparts from Ukraine, United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the EU and Japan among others.

She will use the Conference – the first in-person high level meeting for five years – to push for global trade rules that truly address the modern economy and the conclusion of WTO negotiations on harmful fisheries subsidies.

She will be joined by Trade Minister Ranil Jayawardena and Her Majesty's Ambassador to the WTO, Simon Manley, at the conference – the first for the UK since it became an independent trading nation.

Minister Jayawardena will take part in an event on Sunday to highlight the UK's continued support for Ukraine and condemnation of Russia alongside international allies.

International Trade Minister Ranil Jayawardena will say:

Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion is a threat to democracy and the rules-based order – the foundation of our free, fair and open trading system. The UK will always uphold those values and with our allies, we will protect Ukraine's democratic right to exist.

We believe that free, fair and open trade can prevent yet more lives being destroyed through the looming hunger crisis, exacerbated by Putin's acts and develop a more sustainable, efficient and resilient food system for the future.

Together we must redouble our efforts, put our divisions aside and harness the power of free, open and fair trade to tackle our modern-day challenges.